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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/GAERC: DUTCH VIEWS

REF: STATE 22352

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Post delivered reftel points to key Dutch MFA contacts on March 6, 2008. On March 5, Dutch MFA Senior Policy Officer Jeroen Boender briefed EU diplomats and allies on Dutch views of the March 10-11 GAERC agenda, including the Western Balkans, the Middle East, Zimbabwe, Georgia, Iran, Afghanistan, climate change, Doha negotiations, and financial market instability. END SUMMARY.

WESTERN BALKANS:  
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¶2. (SBU) On the Western Balkans, the Dutch remain concerned about potential Serbian attacks on western embassies and will encourage the GAERC to underline Serbia's obligation to protect diplomats. In addition, the Dutch are concerned about Serbian political and media statements that may aggravate tensions. To date, there have been no attacks on the Dutch embassy in Belgrade. The MFA has received mixed signals about the plans of Serbia's ambassador in the Hague. Nonetheless, the Dutch believe the GAERC conclusions will reaffirm the January offer to engage with Serbia.

THE MIDDLE EAST:  
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¶3. (SBU) On the Middle East, the Dutch are concerned about the escalation of violence in Gaza. The missile attacks should cease, but Israel's response should be proportional. It is not helpful to have one-sided condemnations of Israel. Events show the importance of continuing the efforts of the Annapolis conference and the EU will continue to support this effort. In Lebanon, the Dutch expect an Arab League summit in Damascus in late March and hope the conference will support a resolution of the conflict. The Dutch believe the West should continue to engage Syria, "like it or not," because of Syria's influence in Lebanon. The Dutch look forward to a report from Mr. Solana on his trip to the region.

ZIMBABWE:  
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¶4. (SBU) On Zimbabwe, the Dutch expect the GAERC to reaffirm EU policy, waiting until after the March 29 elections to take further steps.

GEORGIA:

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¶15. (SBU) On Georgia, the Dutch hope to "quicken the pace" of Georgian reforms. At the same time, the Dutch are "hesitant" to accept the proposed free trade and visa liberalization agreements and want to move "step by step."

IRAN:  
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¶16. (SBU) On Iran, the Dutch see the UNSC resolution and UNSC unity as positive signs. Iran cannot deny this signal from the international community. The Dutch would like to see quick and robust implementation of the sanctions by the EU. But while restrictions on individuals are easy to enact, some of the broader bans on banks will be difficult to approve in Brussels.

AFGHANISTAN:  
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¶17. (SBU) On Afghanistan, the Dutch welcome the fact that the police mission will soon be operational, and would like to see the deployment expanded to all of Afghanistan. The Dutch are considering a contribution to the mission but are concerned about human rights. The Dutch parliament has expressed concern about the death sentence for a journalist who merely downloaded material from the Internet.

PAKISTAN:  
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¶18. (SBU) On Pakistan, the Dutch expect little time for debating Pakistan but note that the conclusions are likely to follow the Dutch position, noting the competitive aspects of the recent elections while expressing concern about the irregularities. Dutch aid to Pakistan, with the exception of humanitarian programs, is currently frozen.

CLIMATE CHANGE:  
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¶19. (SBU) Regarding climate change, the Dutch welcome the new EU report on climate change and security, but have only recently received the draft. The Dutch hope for strong involvement of all members in preparing a package on climate change and energy by June, 2009. The Dutch believe the effort should be linked to other global initiatives on climate change.

DOHA:  
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¶10. (SBU) With regard to Doha, the Dutch expect the GAERC conclusions to be procedural in nature but hope for a "balanced and ambitious" result by the end of 2008. The Dutch expect ministerial-level negotiations in April, but there is "lots of work to do."

FINANCIAL:  
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¶11. (SBU) Regarding instability in the financial markets, the Dutch want to ensure any new, stricter market rules are balanced with support for innovation.  
Schofer